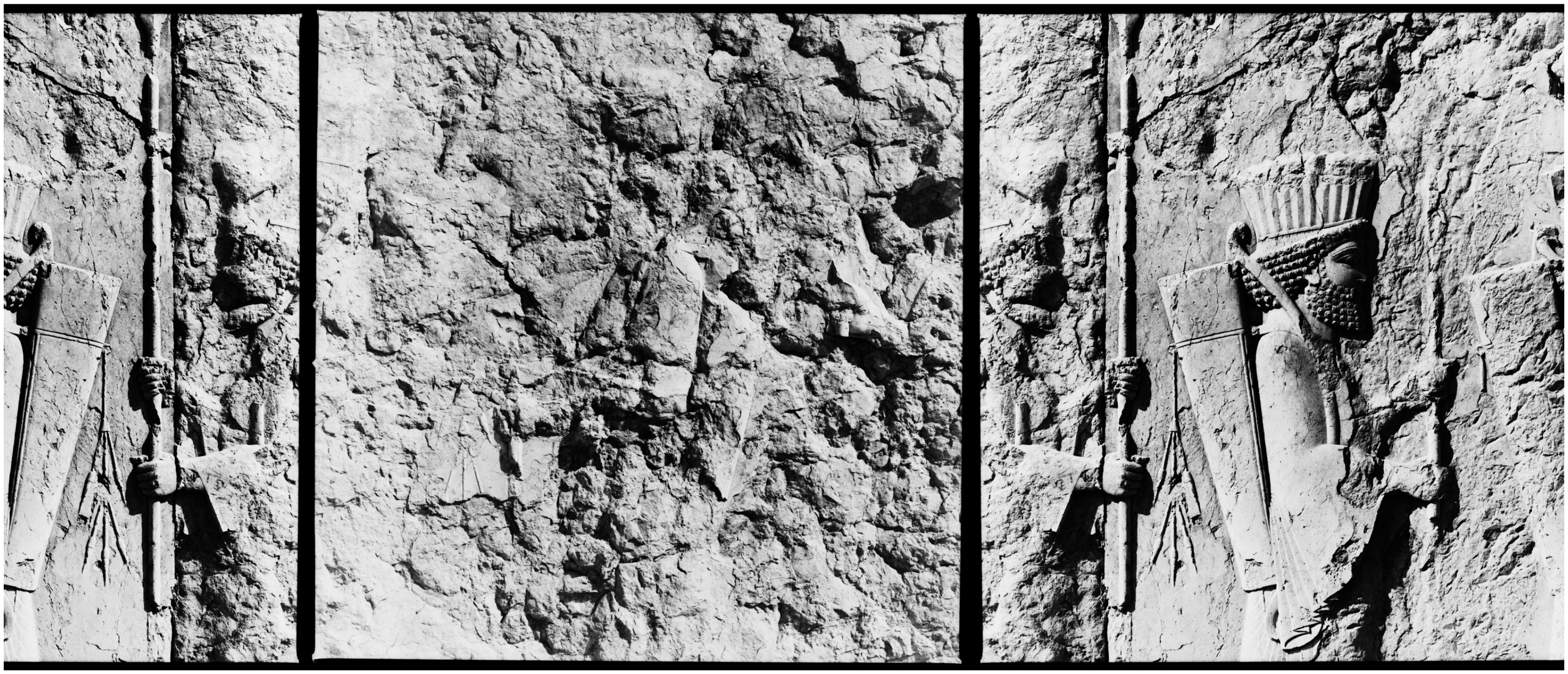
RESURRECTION

A STUDY OF PERSEPOLIS' ICONOGRAPHIES

ALI SHAHBAZYAR



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RESURRECTION

“I invoke the ancient and sovereign Merezu (Milky Way), the greatest seat of battle in the creation of the two spirits.’

-Avesta, Vendidad, XIX, II, 42

Preface

Resurrection is a study of the most intimate message of Persepolis. A universal message of Zarathustra himself to every individual of society was concisely characterized through the art of the Achaemenids: “Asha” or Righteousness, towards “Khashthra Vairya” or Desirable Kingdom; The Progress and Evolution of the universe has a central idea: the establishment of the Desirable Kingdom of Mazda, the wise lord, on earth. The message is simple and manifests through the body of the two audience palaces of Persepolis. Achaemenid art was the end of developments that started in the highest antiquity, which could carry the abstraction of Zarathustra’s teachings. It reflects on Darius the Great, who created the palace as a tribute to Ahura Mazda, pure conscienceness, meaning Lord-Wisdom, who is also the lord patron of Zarathustra in his book of poems, or metrical hymns, The Gathas. In his philosophy, Zarathustra theorized a renovation of the universe. A new dispensation in which the world will become perfect on the last day. The world progresses towards perfection. The world is to be restored to a veritable heaven on earth. The goodness of Mazda and its wisdom make it imperative that the entire creation be saved.

Gathas

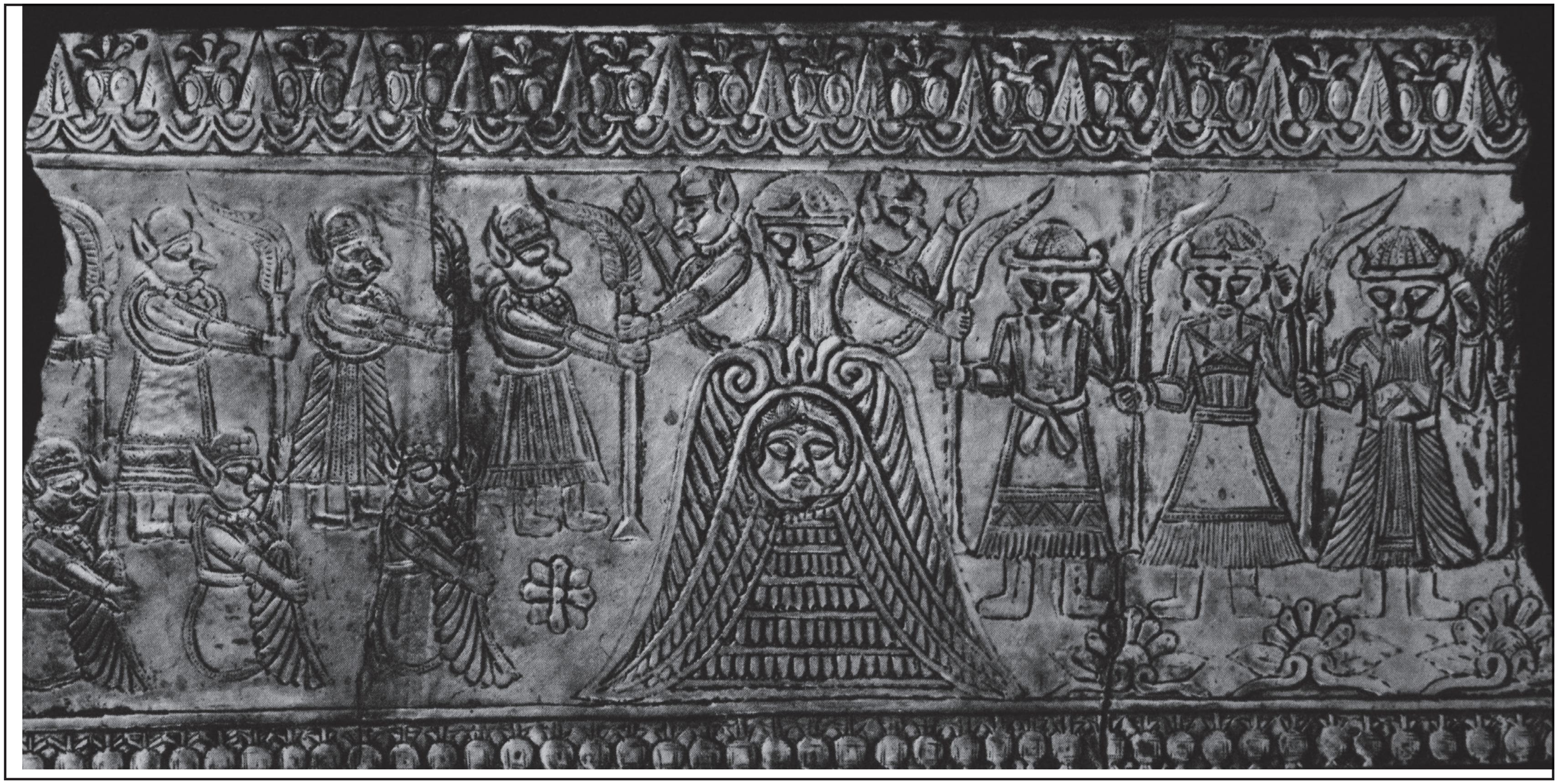
The Gathas, seventeen in number, arranged in five groups, have come to us from Zarathustra himself; that is the only part of the entire Zend Avesta which is written in the first person. In these metrical hymns, the impulse of an onward movement in human morals from collective to personal morality, or from custom to conscience; to a higher state of individual morality, by adoring the Lord Mazda, the wisdom, is felt; “As you sow, so shall you reap” is the Gathic dictum. To have a better understanding, the following are the first three verses of the sacred Gathas:

1- Now, raising my hands in prayer, I ask for happiness in all my endeavors, thou first gem, O Mazda, the pure bringer of joy. I ask for good thoughts and wisdom to bring peace to the world and the soul.

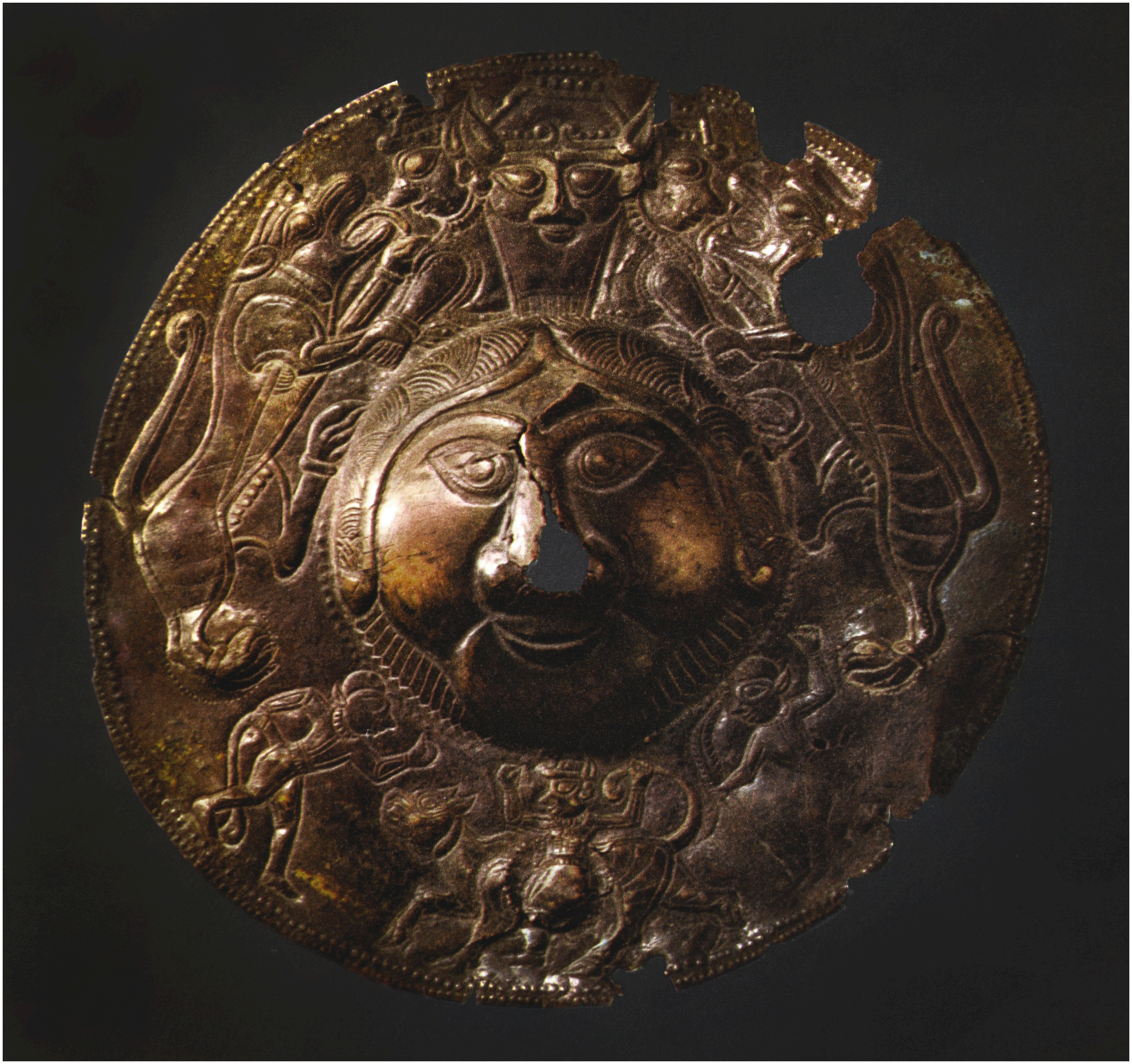
2- May I approach you with good thoughts, O Mazda Ahura? Grant me both the material world and that which is spiritual. Please grant me the benefits of the path of righteousness that will bring happiness in the radiance.

3- I am the one who sings to you, O Truth, O Good Manner, and Mazda, the beginningless Ahura, and the inexhaustible power, the exalting, eloquent thought, and to those who come to me for joy.

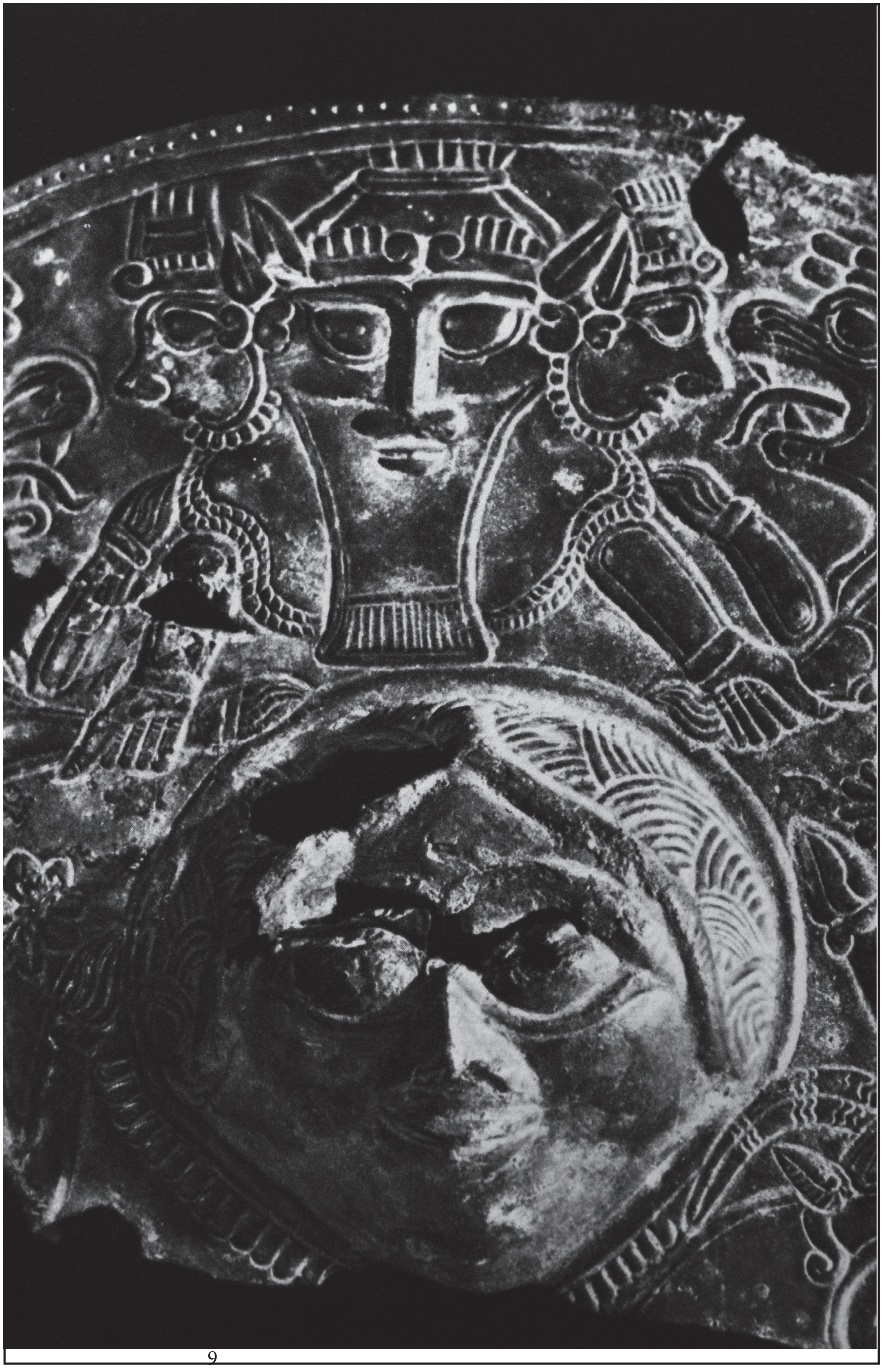
We find in the Gathas two instances of the use of the appellative terms “Mazdao Ahurangho,” Ahura Mazda and his associates (Ys. 30. 9; 31. 4), alluding to the Lord and his ministering angels, Amesha Spentas. Ahura Mazda is the supreme godhead of Zarathustra. Some scholars believe that Mazda is the transfiguration of the Aryan “Varuna” declared by Zarathustra. In the Aryan language phase (roughly 2500 B.C.), Ahura means lord, and Mazda means wisdom. Mazdaka, a derivative of Mazda, occurs twice in Median proper names in the Assyrian inscriptions of Sargon as early as 715 B.C. The Assyrian divine name Assara Mazas (Assara Mazas and his six Anunnakis), which occurs in an inscription of the reign of Assurbanipal, purporting to record events in the still more remote past, is further cited as a possible proof that Mazda may not have been the creation of Zarathustra. The collection Ahura Mazda means literally ‘the Lord Wisdom’, or ‘the Wise Lord.” This compound name, which consolidated into the composite form of Ahura Mazda in the time of the Achaemenians, as shown by the Old Persian Inscriptions, and into Ormazd in the Pahlavi era (Sasanid dynasty) and later Persian works, always preserves the separate forms in the ancient Gathic texts. The forms Ahura or Mazda, respectively, or again the combinations Ahura Mazda or Mazda Ahura, as the case may be, are variously used in the Gathas without any distinction, to designate simply the Supreme Being.



Luristan's silver plaque; the Thasha Khvadhata, Zurvan, Mazda, and Ahriman. 8th-7th Centuries B.C.



Luristan. Umbo of a shield, 8th-7th Centuries B.C.



Luristan. Round Pinhead. 8th-7th Centuries B.C.

Amesha Spentas

Amesha Spenta means “Immortal One.” They do not receive their designations from natural phenomena but are purely the personifications of abstract virtues. They are six in number. They are all created by Ahura Mazda (Yt. I. 25.). Each will smite his opponent at the time of the resurrection. Except for the six Amesha Spentas and three Yazatas (angels), Sraosha, Atar, and Ashi, and a couple of other fundamental characters, the Gathas do not mention any of the divinities of the Aryan epoch. With the godhead Mazda, they form a heptad and are henceforth mentioned as the seven Holy Immortal Ones:

1- Ahura Mazda

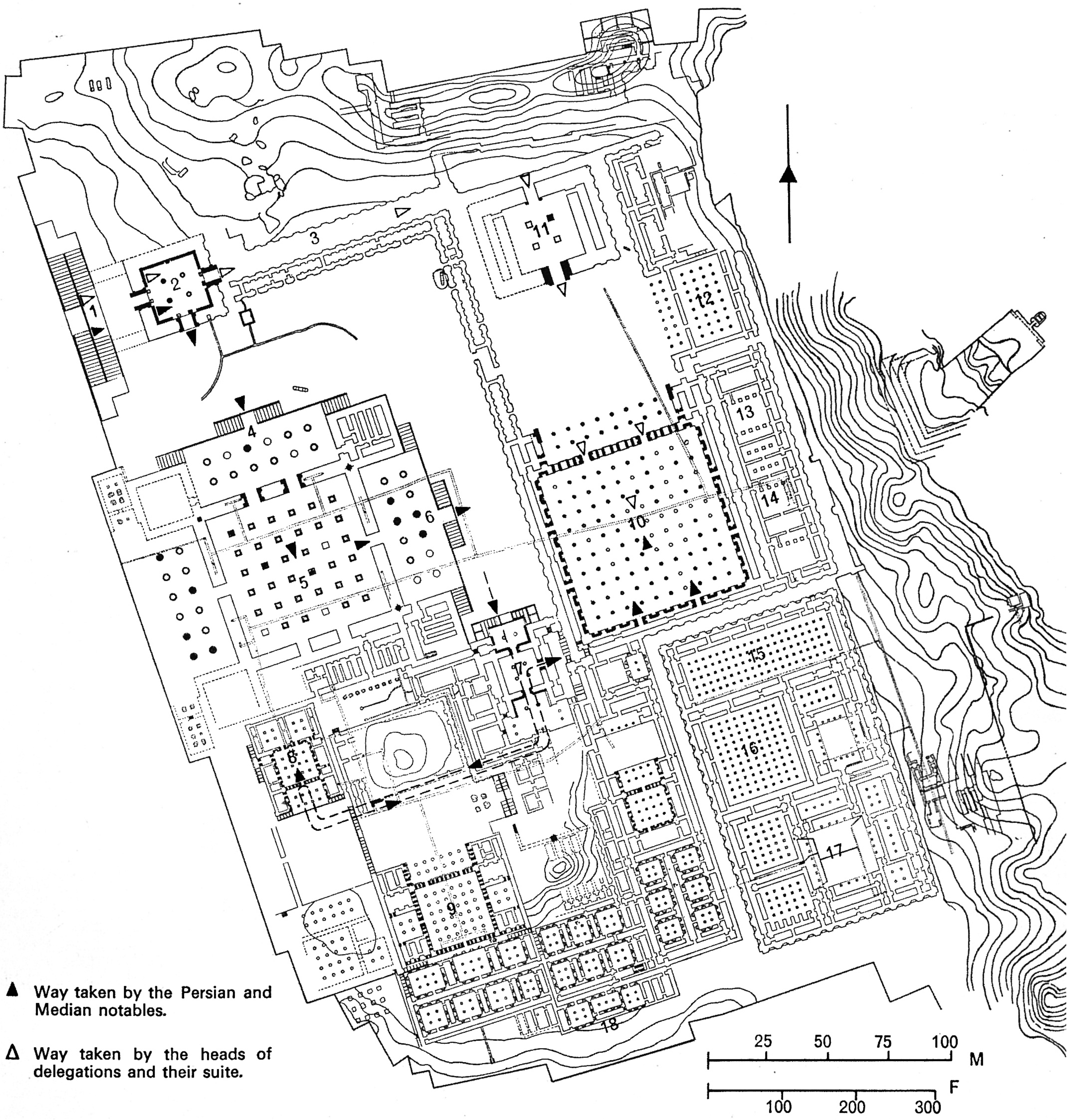
Ahura Mazda is the Being par excellence. He is not begotten, nor is there one like unto him. Beyond him, apart from him, and without him, nothing exists. He is brighter than the brightest of creation, higher than the highest heavens, older than the oldest in the universe. He is changeless. He was, he is, and he will be the same transcendent being, moving all, yet moved by none.

Ahura Mazda is a spirit. There is no anthropomorphic trait in the lofty conception of Ahura Mazda, for he is devoid of all human imperfections. He lives in the heavenly realm and wears the firmament as his garment. He is the father of Vohu Manah, Good Mind, and Asha, Righteousness, and of whom he is the creator. Armaiti, Devotion is his daughter; she is wholly his, and he is the supreme being that has brought forth both Armaiti and Khshathra, the Kingdom.

Ahura Mazda is the lord of wisdom. He is the wise one and the father of wisdom. He is the most knowing one, and the most far-seeing one. His knowledge is unfailing and absolute.

Map of Persepolis:

1- Stairway to the Terrace.
2 - Gate-House of Xerxes, called “Gate of All Nations”.
3 - Processional Way.
4 - North Stairway of the Apadana.
5 - Apadana (Audience Hall).
6 - East Stairway of the Apadana.
7 - Tripylon.
8 - Palace of Darius (Banquet Hall).
9 - Palace of Xerxes (Banquet Hall).
10 - Hall of 100 Columns or Throne Hall.
11 - Unfinished Gate-House.
12, 13, 14 - Military Area.
15 - Hall of 100 Columns (3rd part of the Royal Treasury).
16 - Hall of 99 Columns (central part of the Treasury), temporary Throne Hall built by Darius.
17 - Storerooms of the Royal Treasury.
18 - South Facade of the Terrace overlooking the plain. In the center, the Royal Box.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▲ Way taken by the Persian and Median notables.

Δ Way taken by the heads of delegations and their suite.

2- Vohu Manah

Genius of high thinking and wisdom. He occupies the first place in the celestial hierarchy and wields great power. The illumination of the human mind comes through Vohu Manah. Through him, Zarathustra, with hands uplifted in pious supplication, longs to approach Ahura Mazda.

3- Asha

Impersonation of righteousness. The basic concept of this spiritual being goes far back to the Indo-Iranian period. The name asha, as it is generally now pronounced, must undoubtedly have been pronounced in ancient times as arta or areta, the latter variant being also found and equivalent to the Vedic rta. The Gathas and the Later Avestan works generally write the term asha, whereas the Old Persian Inscriptions use the term arta as an element of proper names. During the Pahlavi period, the asha and the arta forms were used in various ways.

Zarathustra guides humanity to Asha's righteousness. Ahura Mazda is the father of Asha. Through his divine wisdom, he created this embodiment of righteousness. Mazda is the ever-helping friend of those who befriend Asha.

4- Haurvatat and Ameretat

Dual virtue of perfection and immortality. Haurvatat is the fulfillment of the end of man's life on this earth, as Ameretat will be the eternal prize for his soul in the next world. Haurvatat and Ameretat form a spiritual pair indissolubly bound together with the welfare of humanity, and the two are always celebrated together. No single prayer is addressed to Haurvatat or Ameretat alone in the Gathas. Haurvatat and Ameretat have their sacred mantras or formulas, and the one who pronounces these gets the best reward.

5- Khshathra Vairya

The Divine kingdom of Ahura Mazda. Khshathra, the kingdom, or Vohu Khshathra, the Good Kingdom, Khshathra Ishtoish, the kingdom of desire, or Khshathra Vairya, the Wished-for Kingdom, are terms standing for the divine majesty, the sovereign power of Ahura Mazda.

6- Armaiti

Abstraction of devotion. The personified female abstraction of devotion. Armaiti, like Aramati, her counterpart in the Vedas, stands for the spirit of devotion. The attribute Spenta, holy, is the epithet sometimes prefixed to her name in the Gathas. She is the daughter of Mazda. The realization of the wisdom of Vohu Manah and the devotion of Armaiti help man attain the ideal state of righteousness.

7- Geush Urvan and Geush Tashan

The spirits of the earth, or the universe. Two beings personified and essential in introducing Zarathustra as the chosen one of Ahura Mazda to humanity are Geush Tashan, ‘the fashioner of the earth, and Geush Urvan, ‘the soul of the universe. The relationship between Ahura Mazda and Geush Tashan is very subtle, and scholars have been divided in their interpretation of these abstractions. One view is that Geush Tashan is the personification of Mazda's creative activity and is not separate from the godhead. Some scholars are inclined to take Geush Tashan as an independent being who has created life on earth. Some consider Geush Tashan and Geush Urvan to represent the entire universe.

The word “Geu,” which Western translators have translated mistakenly as “cow,” is used in various parts of the Vedas to mean earth. The Latin word Geo, which means earth, is related to earth and geology, such as Geologist or Geology.

Zrvan

Zrvan or Time is held by the ancient Iranians (roughly 1500 B.C. onward) to be the generative principle of the universe. They believed that Time is the source and father of existence. Zrvan accompanied Mithra in his migration to the far west and was placed at the pinnacle of the divine hierarchy in the Mithraic cult. Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu (evil spirit) have sprung from this primordial principle. They are its twin children. Time and space seem to have been alternative answers to the early groping of primitive Iranian thinkers to find some solution to the problem of the origin of things in the universe, and these two elements, time and space, are incorporated for that matter.

Zrvan Akarana

Like several abstract ideas personified in time, this genius of boundless time is not classified as an angel. He is often invoked by name in company with space and Vayu, the genius of wind (Ys. 72. 10; Vd. 19, 13; Ny. 1. 8.).

Zrvan Daregho-Khvadhata

On the other hand, a time of long duration is a limited period, portioned out from the boundless time. It refers to the world's cycle of twelve thousand years. Thwasha Khvadhata. Space or the infinite expanse is faintly personified under "Thasha Khvadhata", or sovereign space. It is generally invoked along with the genius of time (Ys. 72. 10; Vd. 19. 13; Ny. 1. 8.). In one place (Yt. 10. 66.), it is depicted as going alongside Mithra. Like time, it is not ranked among the angels.

Age of Zarathustra

According to Ernst Hertzfeld, "The Gathas and the rest of the Avesta put Zoroaster in the sixth century, about 570-500 B.C., and the time of his activity under the reigns of Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius." He continues: "…The Spitama, a Median house, appears in the fifth century B.C. in the business documents of Murasu Sons of Nippur, bankers of Darius II and Parysatis. The Spitama, chief of the clan, had married the daughter of the last Median king, Astyages; their son Spitakes, the "young Spitama," is Zoroaster.

After Cyrus's conquest of Agbatana in 550, the heiress married Cyrus; their daughter Atossa was a half-sister of Zoroaster. Yasht. 13 enumerates 240 names that came into power after the convulsion of the Gomata episode, raising Zoroaster's ethical and political ideas, his monotheism and dualism, to the position of being a religion of the rulers."

The ancient Greeks saw in Zoroastrianism the archetype of the dualistic view of the world and human destiny. Zarathustra was supposed to have instructed Pythagoras in Babylon and inspired the Chaldean doctrines of astrology and magic. Zoroastrianism likely influenced the development of Judaism and the birth of Christianity. The Christians, following a Jewish tradition, identified Zoroaster with Ezekiel, Nimrod, Seth, Balaam, and Baruch and even, through the latter, with Jesus Christ himself. On the other hand, as the presumed founder of astrology and magic, Zarathustra could be considered the arch-heretic.

The two hundred years of peace in the empire are why Zoroaster's thoughts, passing over into Judaism and Christianity, acted upon human thoughts and thus, on the course of universal history.

The Birth of the History

Human history began 50,000 BCE or thereabouts. Perhaps 100,000 BCE, but certainly not before. Human evolution has a far more extended pedigree; at least three billion years have passed since the origin of life, and six million years since our lineage split from that of the chimpanzee. History, the cumulative development of events and knowledge, is a recent and remarkably brief affair. Little of significance happened until 20,000 BCE; people continued living as hunter-gatherers, just as their ancestors had been doing for millions of years. They lived in small communities and never remained within one settlement for very long. A few cave walls were painted, and some rather fine hunting weapons were made, but no events influenced the course of future history, which created the modern world.

Then came an astonishing 15,000 years that saw the origin of farming, towns, and civilisation. By 5000 BCE, the foundations of the modern world had been laid, and nothing that came after classical Persia and Greece, the Industrial Revolution, the atomic age, or the Internet has ever matched the significance of those events. If 50,000 BCE marked the birth of history, 20,000-5000 BCE was its coming of age.

The peak of the last ice age occurred around 20,000 BCE and is known as the last glacial maximum, or LGM. Before this date, people were thin on the ground and struggling with a deteriorating climate. Subtle changes in the planet's orbit around the sun had caused massive ice sheets to expand across much of North America, northern Europe, and Asia. The Earth was inundated by drought; the sea level had fallen to expose vast and often barren coastal plains. Human communities survived the harshest conditions by retreating to refugia where firewood and foodstuffs could still be found

Soon after 20,000 BCE, global warming began. Initially, this was relatively slow, with many small ups and downs in temperature and rainfall. By 15,000 BCE, the great ice sheets had begun to melt; by 12,000 BCE, the climate had started to fluctuate, with dramatic surges of warmth and rain followed by sudden returns to cold and drought. Soon after 10,000 BCE, an astonishing global warming spurt brought the ice age to its close and ushered in the Holocene world we live in today. During these 10,000 years of global warming and its immediate aftermath, the course of human history changed. By 5000 BCE, many people through the world lived by farming. New types of animals and plants - domesticated species - had appeared; the farmers inhabited permanent villages and towns, and supported specialist artisans, priests, and chiefs. Indeed, they were little different from us today: the Rubicon of history had been crossed, from a lifestyle of hunting and gathering to that of farming. Those who remained hunter-gatherers also now lived in a manner quite different from that of their ancestors at the LGM.

The Antiquity of Myths

Humans have been roaming around the globe and telling their stories since the end of the last Ice Age around 15,000 years ago. For history to begin, people required the modern mind, which is quite different from that of any human ancestor. It is a mind with unlimited imagination, curiosity, and inventive powers. By 50,000 years ago, a peculiarly creative mind had evolved. The diversity of creation myths among Aboriginal peoples worldwide is evidence of their creativity and mental dynamism.

In Native American mythology, the myth of the twins is a widespread and significant theme, appearing across various tribes from Canada to Mesoamerica, the Middle East, and the inhabitants of the Zagros Mountains. These twins are often portrayed as heroes, embodying dualities like good and evil, creation and destruction, or life and death. Their stories frequently involve overcoming adversity, battling monsters, and establishing order in the world.

Common Elements

Dualistic Nature: Twins often represent opposing forces, but are also interconnected and necessary for global balance.

Heroic Figures: They are frequently depicted as heroes who fight monsters, protect their people, and bring about positive change.

Magical Abilities: Twins are often attributed with supernatural powers, which they use to overcome challenges.

Separation and Reunion: Many Mesoamerican creation myths feature twins being separated at birth, often due to a tragic event, and their eventual reunion as they embark on their heroic journeys. When there are twins in the womb of the mother, there is usually a severe consequence in the myth because even if there are only two, the children start to fight and compete to find out who will have the honour of being born first. One of them, the bad one, does not hesitate to find a shortcut to be born earlier; instead of following the natural way, he splits up the mother's body to escape it.

Cultural Significance: The twin myth is deeply embedded in the cultural beliefs and values of various tribes, often serving as a framework for understanding the world and their place in it.

Examples of Twin Myths

Maya Hero Twins: In the Popol Vuh, Hunahpu and Xbalanque face trials in the underworld, outsmart the Lords of Death, and ascend to become celestial bodies.

Navajo Monster Slayer and Born-For-Water: These twins, the Hero Twins, are central figures in Navajo mythology. They are known for their bravery and for protecting their people from monsters.

The Iranian creation myth of Zrvan, the time:

The Armenian writer Eznik, in the fifth century, attests the existence of a sect that held Zrvan, or Time, as the sovereign lord and was named after it. The sect, he says, holds Zrvan as the generative principle of everything, and it was from this primordial principle, both Ormazd and Ahriman have sprung. They are its twin children. The Armenian historians credit Mihr Narsih, the premier of Yazdagard II: Zrvan, who existed when the earth was not, and the heaven was not, with brooding over the thought of begetting a son who would create the universe. A doubt crossed his mind, the account claims, at the end of a thousand years, lest his sacrifice should turn out fruitless and he would not be blessed with a child. The sacrifice, however, turned out fruitful, but not without misfortune. Zrvan conceived two offspring, one as the result of his sacrifice, the other as the outcome of the doubt that had desecrated his mind.

He resolved to give sovereignty to the man who was born first. Ormazd, who seems to have been possessed of foreknowledge even before he was thus born, read the thoughts of his father Zrvan and gave them out to his comrade in the embryo. Ahriman thereupon perforated the womb and came into existence before Ormazd. He demanded sovereignty from his begetter, Zurvan, who disowned this ugly, dark creature and gave the scepter to Ormazd, who was resplendent with light. Ahriman now charged his father with breaking his vow. To free himself from this accusation, Zrvan entered into a covenant with Ahriman and decreed that the empire of the universe should be conjointly ceded to both Ormazd and Ahriman for nine thousand years. However, the right of priority was ever to be with the Good Spirit. After the expiration of this period, Ormazd, it was destined, should be at liberty to deal with his wicked brother as he liked.

Pre-Gathic Iranians

The earliest non-Mazdean writers speak of Zoroastrianism as the religion of dualism. Early Greek writers, whom we can safely assert were contemporaneous, at least in the Later Avestan period, talk about the religion of Iran as based on the belief in two rival spirits. On the authority of Aristoxenus (about 320 B.C.), Hippolytus relates that the Persians believed in two primeval causes of existence: Light, or the father, and Darkness, the mother. On the authority of Diogenes Laertius, we have the assurance that Eudoxus and Aristotle wrote of these powers as Zeus, Oromazdes, Hades, or Areimanios.

Plutarch (c. AD 40-120), writing in Isis and Osiris from the Moralia (sections 46-47 gives the following report on the religion of the Iranians:

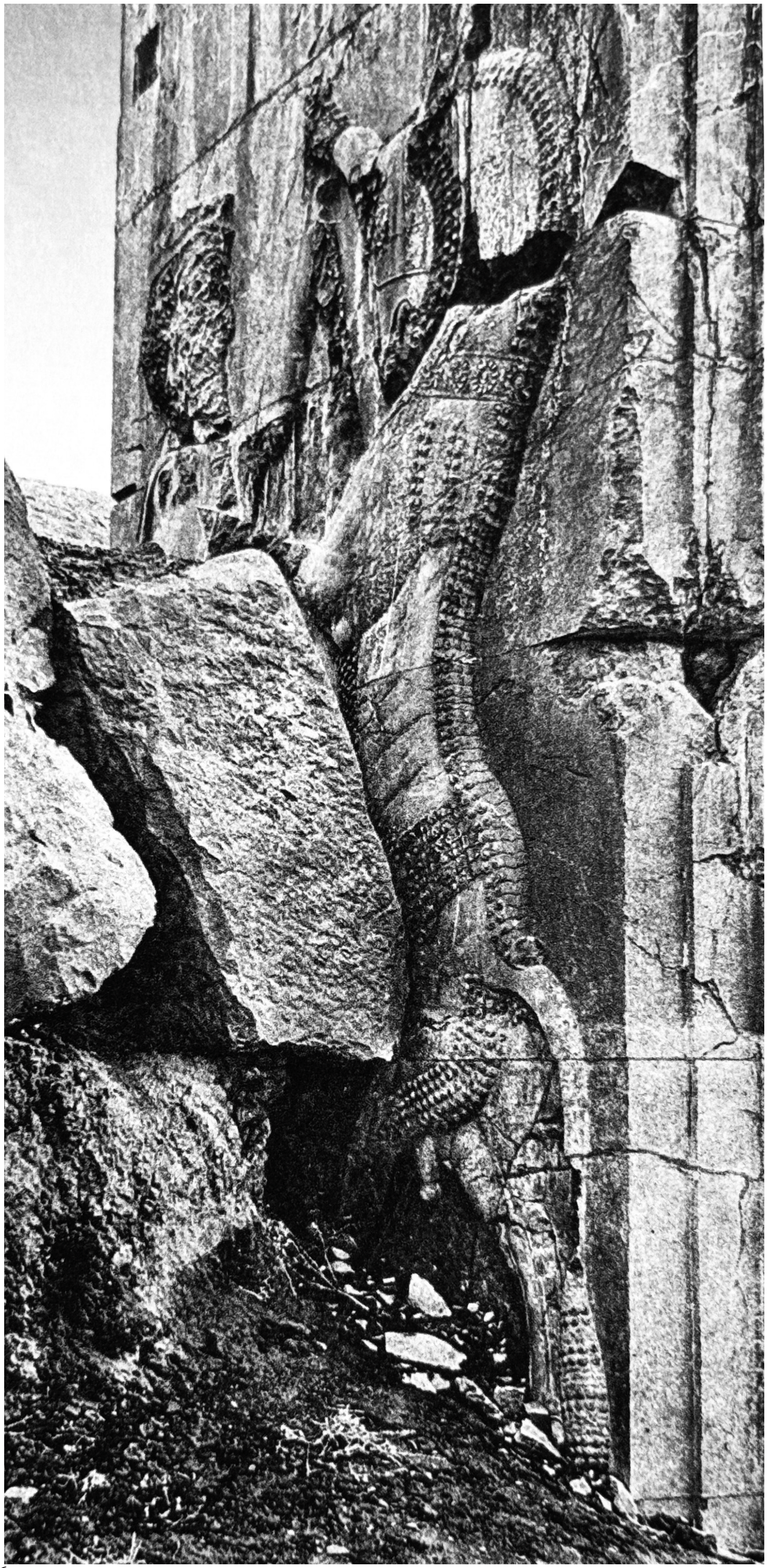
"The great majority and the wisest of men hold this opinion: Iranians believe there are two gods, rivals as it were, the Artificer of good and the evil. Some call the better one a god and the other a daemon, such as Zoroaster, the sage, who, they record, lived five thousand years before the time of the Trojan War. He called the one Oromazes and the other Arcimanius. He further declared that among all the things perceivable to the senses, Oromazes may best be compared to light, and Areimanius, conversely, to darkness and ignorance, and midway between the two is Mithras; for this reason, the Persians give to Mithras the name of "Mediator." Zoroaster has also taught that men should make votive offerings, thank-offerings to Oromazes, and averting and mourning offerings to Areimanius. They pound up in a mortar a particular plant called omomi [= haoma], at the same time invoking Hades and Darkness; then they mix it with the blood of a wolf that has been sacrificed and carry it out and cast it into a place where the sun never shines. They believe that some of the plants belong to the good god and others to the evil daemon; so also of the animals they think that dogs, fowls, and hedgehogs, for example, belong to the good god, but that water-rats belong to the evil one; therefore the man who has killed the most of these they hold to be fortunate."

Another example of twins among Indo-Iranians or ancient Aryas is the legend of Yama and Yami of the Rig Veda and their counterparts in Avesta as Mashya and Mashyana, children of Gaya-Maretan (Kayomarth), son of the Ahura Mazda. The human race comes from Mashya and Mashyana, like Yama and Yami.

Temple of Khshathra Vairya or Desirable Kingdom

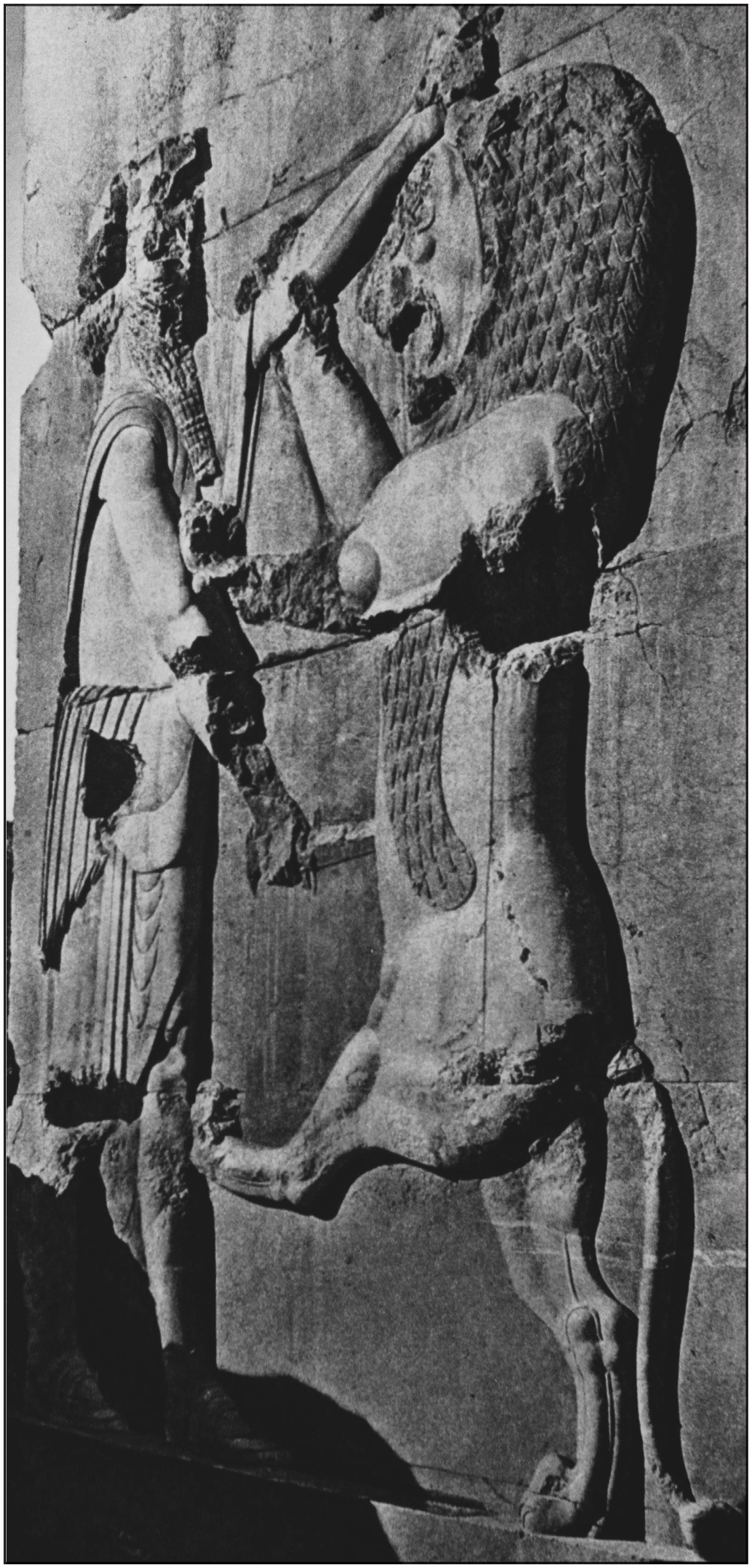
East of the Apadana stands a second audience hall, the Hall of a Hundred Columns, the foundation laid by Xerxes and finished by Artaxerxes I. This building seems to have been named sat-stun (hundred columns). The square interior is only slightly larger than that of the Apadana but has ten rows of ten columns; one portico to the North has two rows of eight columns flanked by two colossal bulls like the main gate. Around the other side runs a closed, narrow passage for service purposes.

In the four side doors of the Hall of a Hundred Columns, a human figure is represented fighting a bull, a lion, a griffon with a scorpion's tail, and a griffon, which resembles the four cardinal points of heaven. The style of the combat suggests zodiacal alignment rather than fighting. Inspired by the style of the Maya cosmic calendar disc, the author believes that the battle motifs in the temple of "Khushtra Vairiya" or "Wished-for Kingdom" (Hall of One Hundred Columns), contrary to popular belief, represent the alignment of the zodiac signs emphasizing four ages of their cosmic calendar rather than mere decorative staging: According to Mazdean cosmogony, six areas of the zodiac ruled by Mazda and light, and six by Ahriman and darkness. The constellation Leo symbolizes the heat of summer, and the Taurus symbolizes the fertility of spring, which are creations of Mazda. On the other hand, the griffon with a scorpion's tail indicates the constellation Scorpio of fall, and the griffon, the evil creature, represents the coldness and darkness of winter, which are creations of Ahriman. Possibly, the human figures were meant to represent the four heroes. If we stress the symbolic and intentional numbers of the four heroes, there is such a group of four, in the Haoma Yasht (which belonegs to the Aryan phase before separation into Iranian and Indian), as four legendary monarchs; Yima, Thraetaona, Krsaspa (later replaced by Rustam), and Zarathustra, are mentioned as sovereigns.

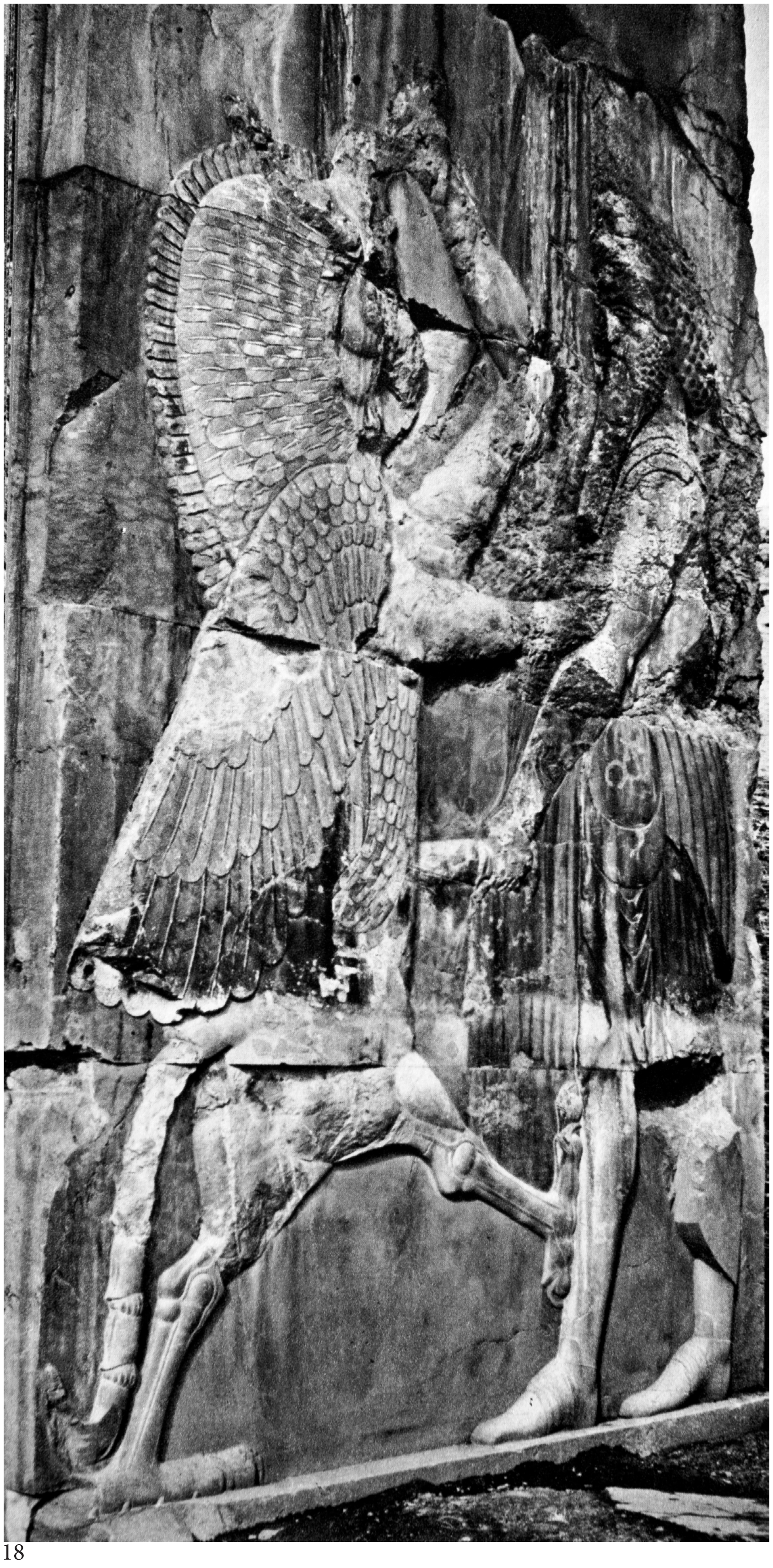


Side doors of the Hundred Columns Hall: a hero and a bull; the Taurus Alignment.

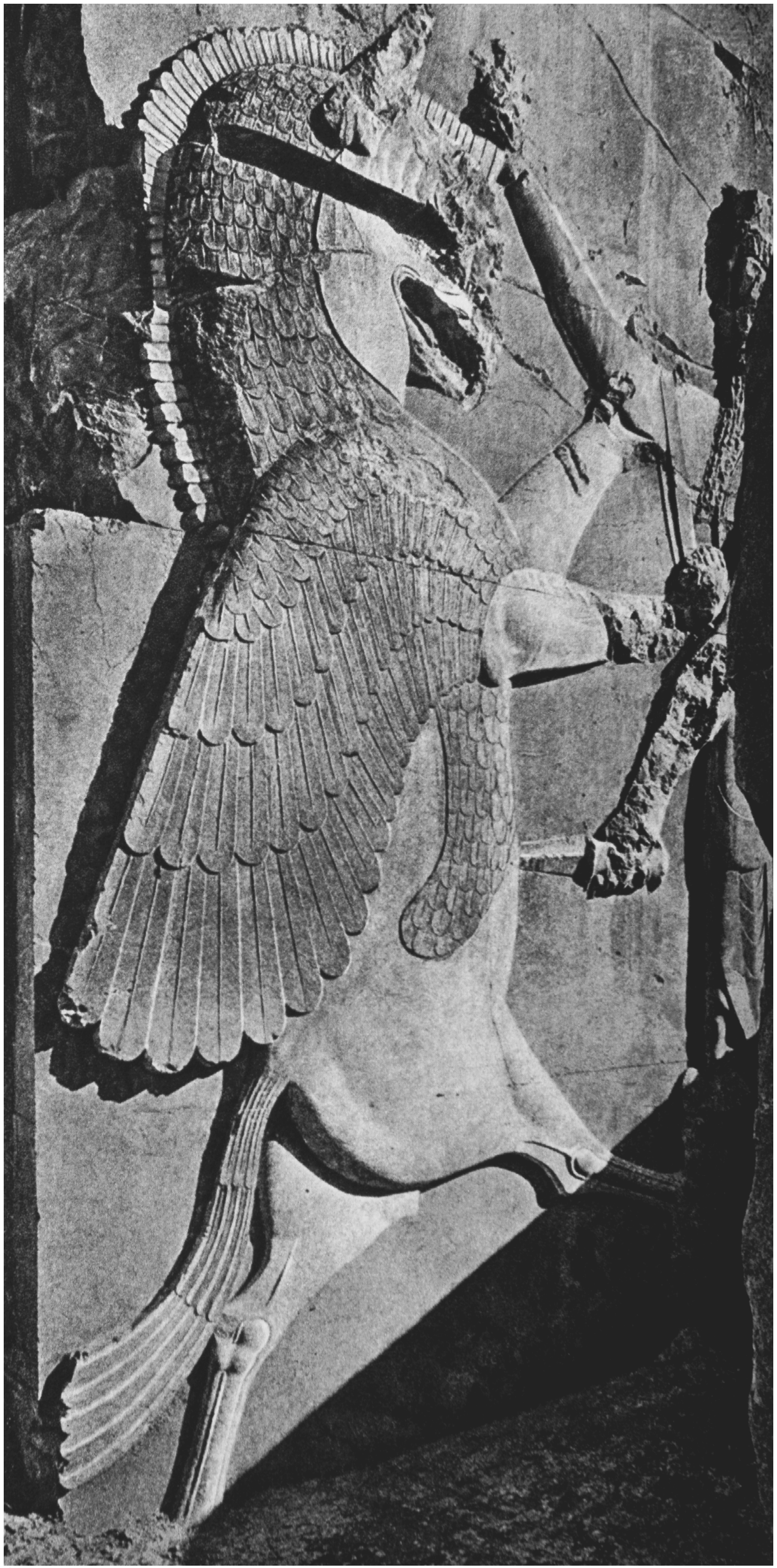
Khshathra Vairya, the “Desirable Kingdom” of Mazda, is the term for the divine majesty, the sovereign power of Mazda, which represents a state or a condition brought about in the world by man’s work.



Side doors of the Hundred Columns Hall: a hero and a lion; the Leo Alignment.



Side doors of the Hundred Columns Hall: a hero and a griffon with a scorpion's tail; the Scorpio Alignment.

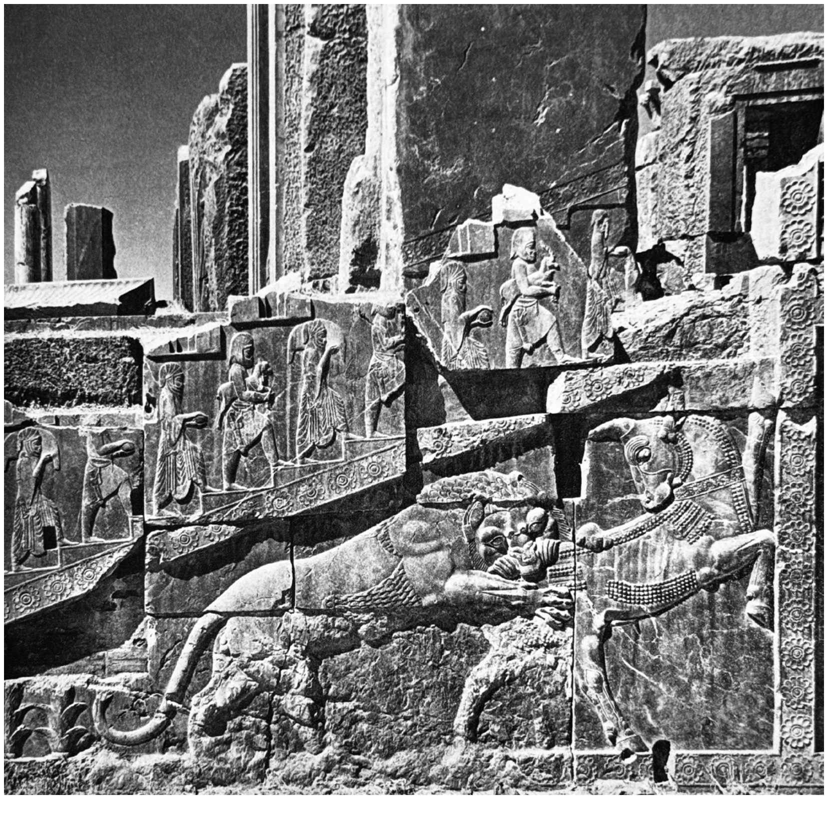


Side doors of the Hundred Columns Hall: a hero and a griffon; the Aquarius Alignment. Aquarius is the House of Saturn; the king of Darkness (according to Bundahishn).

Temple of Asha, the Righteousness

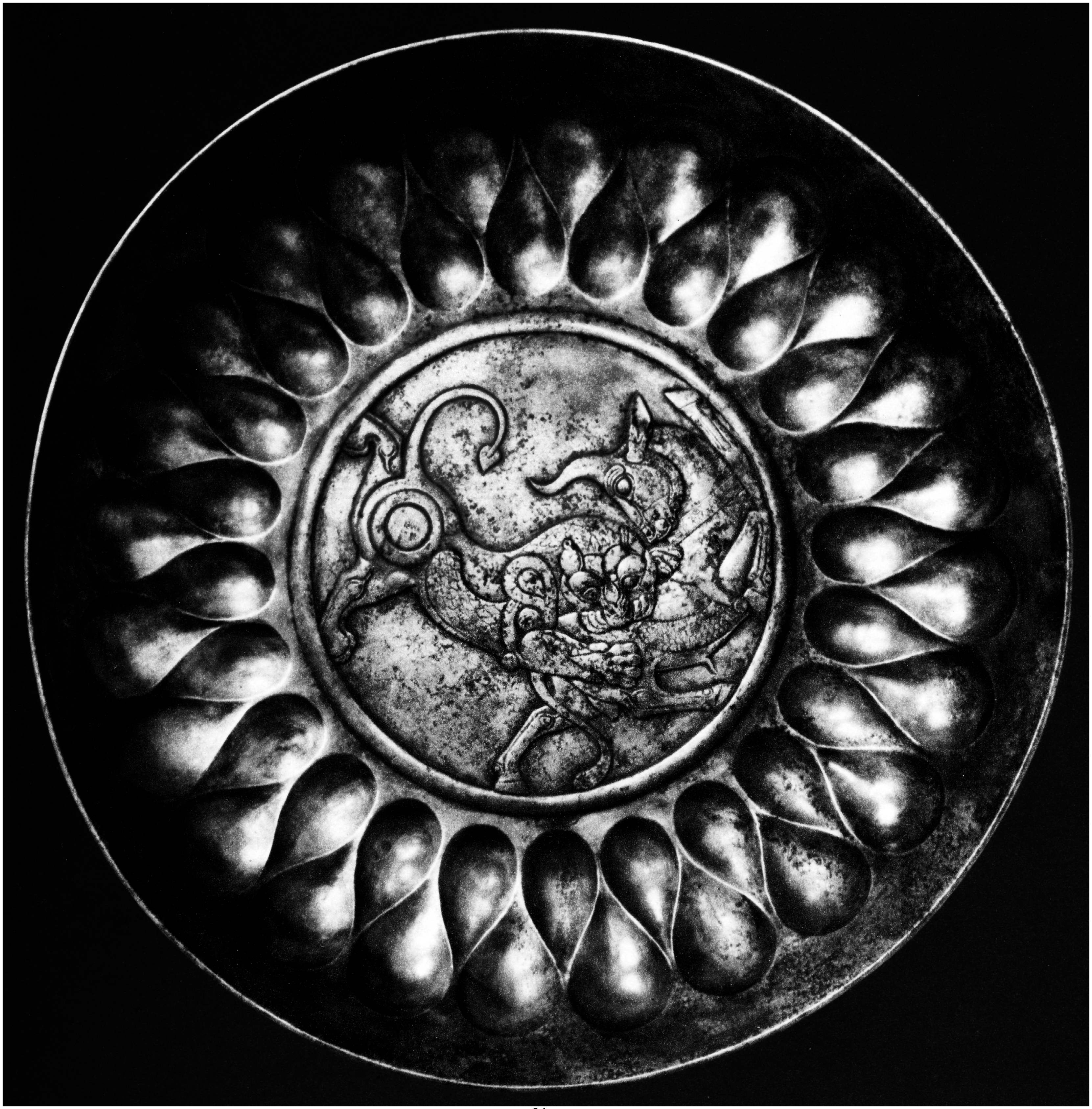
The first building, in place, size, and date, is the great Apadana, which was begun under Darius and finished under Xerxes. Its dates are given by the gold and silver foundation documents discovered in two corners of the central hall and by the inscriptions on the frieze of enamelled bricks from the top of its walls. The convenient term apadana does not occur in the Persepolitan inscriptions, but is used for an identical building at Susa. The apadana has a square interior hall with six rows of six columns, enclosed by walls of sun-dried bricks, 15 feet thick, about 250 feet in length, and over 60 feet high to the ceiling. This immense room could hold up to 10,000 people. On three sides, it had open porticoes of two rows of six columns, of the same height. At the corners of such a plan, tower-like rooms containing staircases and guard accommodation are produced.

Around the body of the Apadana, the lion and bull always stand at the side of the tribute processions. The lion symbolizes the will of the universe and nature. On the other hand, Vohu Manah, Good Mind, or Vahishta Manah, Best Mind, is the genius of cattle as well. According to Gatha (Ys. 31. 10.), “The diligent husband man who grows fodderforcattle is the promoter of Vohu Manah.” One of the Gathic passages incidentally mentions cattle in connection with Vohu Manah. So, the symmetrical tribute procession carved around the Apadana palace signifies worshiping Mazda, or Wisdom, through the Asha or righteousness, and Vohu Manah, or Good Mind.



Dish: Expression of the Asha Vahishta; A lion attacking a bull. The heat of the summer over fertility of the spring which generates Asha and all the goods. 5th-4th Centuries B.C.

Persepolis, Apadana palace, South of the tribute processions, 6th-5th Centuries B.C.



Resurrection

Resurrection started with my first trip to Persepolis. Having my camera ready in hand to shoot, I knew almost nothing about this place as I wandered among the ruins of the capital of the ancient world. My trip became more complicated at the end of the day, when I realized I hadn't taken any pictures. Fifteen years later, after much research and studying history and theology, I returned to Persepolis and took the pictures I needed for the "Resurrection."

For the Achaemenids, making such a massive building required an acute knowledge of architecture, irrigation techniques, metallurgy techniques, mathematics, geography, and astronomy, to name a few, but most importantly, motivation. Their catalyst, for that matter, was light. They were worshipers of light. They believed in light as ultimate wisdom. The winged disc as the crown of Persepolis signifies the light of wisdom (Mazda). They also believed in time (Zrvan) as the creator of light and darkness. They were observers of the light.

They believed a twelve-thousand-year eon was a battle between darkness and light. They believed in agriculture as the righteous work in life. They thought heaven's creation on earth was possible only through wisdom and righteousness. From the early 7th century B.C., their forefather, Achaemenes (Hakhamanish), migrated from north to south of the Iranian plateau and settled in Anshan territory. From his son, Teispes, come two lines of kings. The kings of the older line were Cyrus I, Cambyses I, Cyrus II(Cyrus the Great), and Cambyses II. They believed in the polytheism of the old Iranian culture; a belief system of Bronze Age Aryans and consequently of the magi of the Medes empire, which was an admiration for thirty-three goddesses and archangels.

After the death of Cambyses II (522 B.C.), the junior line, who already accepted the monotheism of Zarathustra, came to the throne with Darius I (the Great), who founded Persepolis. All the descendants of the new empire pledged to complete Darius' plans. Darius designed the terracing and water channeling system and carved the entire platform's drains. The construction work was finished by Artaxerxes I. By Artaxerxes II, after 400 B.C., the Magi of the old Daevayasnian Cult reacted against Zoroaster's teaching and brought back the old divinities, Mithra, Anahita, and Verethragna, who arrived on the scene, resulting in the final establishment of the Iranian church, which is Zoroastrian by name but Magian in essence. Zoroaster's teachings were too spiritual to become a popular cult. The Dynasty ended with the death of Darius III, following his defeat (330 B.C.) by Alexander the Great.

Art Works

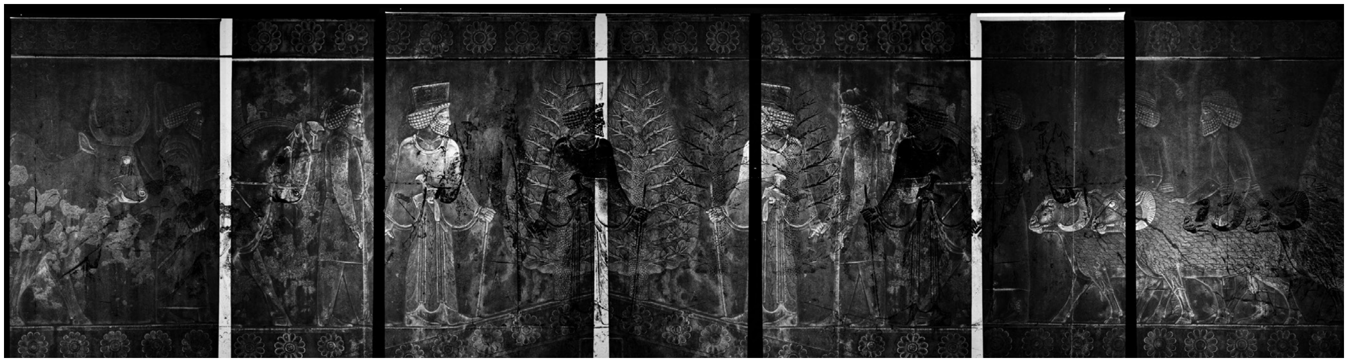
Taking pictures of Persepolis is highly challenging. In Achaemenid times, Persepolis was very colorful. They used seven or eight colors, including gold and lazurite. The vastness of the architecture suggests wide-angle lenses. The limited visiting time for tourists enforces extremely high-key exposures. The restoration works destroyed the effect of time passage and its natural beauty. The relic is entirely scratched by mementos, some as old as centuries. To overcome all these issues and obstacles, I first decided to render it to the black and white film medium, anticipating Zoroaster's dualism. I also used the Sabatier Effect to reduce the high-key effect of the midday sun. Instead of wide-angle lenses and rectangle formats, I used a square format of the Hasselblad with a telephoto lens to collage the close-ups later on as phonemes to

build up words as simple as "Asha". The symmetrical layout of the stairway of the Apadana palace encouraged me to build triptychs that mirror the motifs to resemble the symmetry of the tribute processions. Each artwork has been ornamented by being named after Zoroaster's well-merited Spentas of his Mazdayasnian doctrine, which is essentially seven in number, contrary to thirty-three devas and celestial beings of the Bronze Age Aryans and Magian belief system.

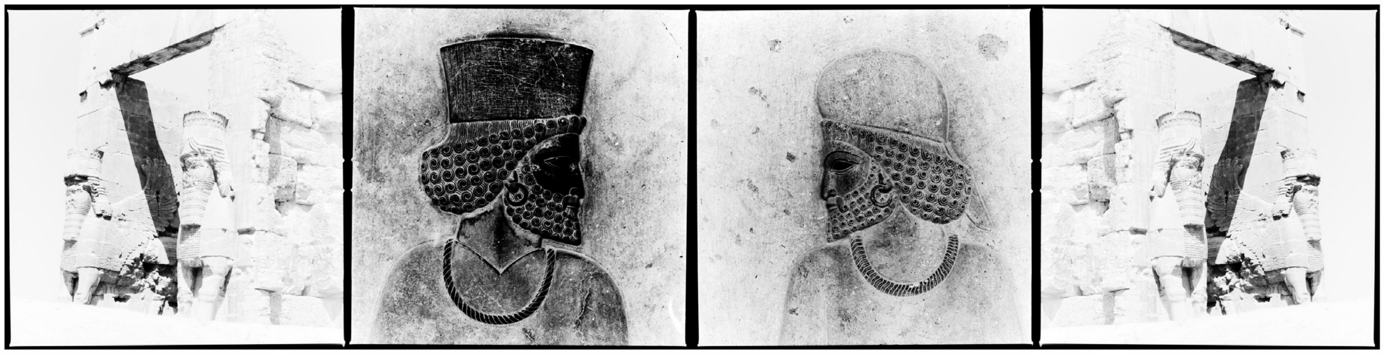
ASHA; The righteous way of the creation and nature.

VOHU MANAH: Good thoughts and wisdom.

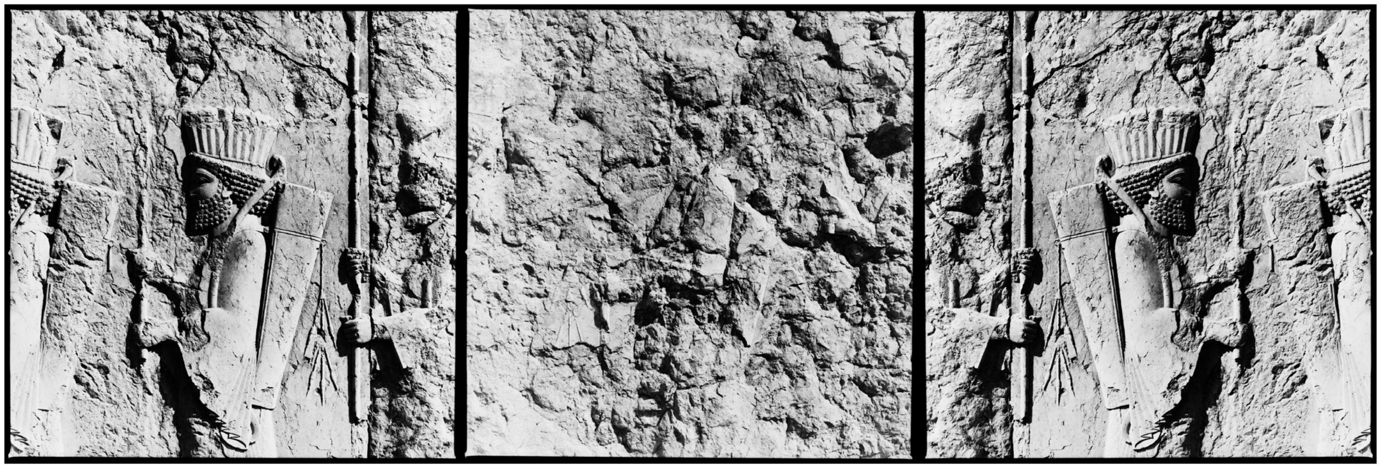
ARMAITI: The devotion.



GEUSH URVAN: The spirit of the cosmos.



KHASHTHRA VAIRYA: The desirable kingdom.



HAURVATAT: The Perfection. AMERETAT: The immortality.

●

“The Gathas and the rest of the Avesta put Zoroaster in the sixth century, about 570-500 B.C., and the time of his activity under the reigns of Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius.

The Spitama, a Median house, appears in the fifth century B.C. in the business documents of Murasu, sons of Nippur, bankers of Darius II and Parysatis.

The Spitama, chief of the clan, had married the daughter of the last Median king, Astyages; their son Spitakes, the ‘young Spitama’, is Zoroaster.

After Cyrus’ conquest of Agbatana in 550, the heiress married Cyrus; their daughter Atossa was a half-sister of Zoroaster.

Yasht 13 enumerates 240 names that came into power after the convulsion of the Gomta episode, and Zoroaster’s ethical and political ideas, his monotheism and dualism, rose to the position of being a religion of the rulers.

The two hundred years of peace in the empire are why Zoroaster’s thoughts, passing over into Judaism and Christianity, acted upon human thoughts and thus, on the course of universal history.

There are neither eastern localities nor eastern traditions, nor a western localization of the eastern localities of Zoroaster’s life. The whole terminology is wrong.

There is only an Iranian and no Turkistanian tradition, not only about the life of Zoroaster, but about everything.

Some indications in the Gathas can be interpreted as referring to Raga, Komis, and Tosa; in the Avesta, some old passages refer equally to Tosa and Sistan.

And there is, later, the definite tradition, old already in the 2nd century B.C., that Zoroaster was from Raga, which belonged to his family, that the Spitama, therefore, was a Median house.

The sanction of Zoroastrism did not mean the eradication of the old cults. Zoroaster’s doctrine did not live on as a separate religion because it was fundamentally much too spiritualized to become a popular cult.

It is the result of history, not of ‘mission, that parts of it survived at all.”

-Ernst Herzfeld.
Zoroaster and his World, Princeton, 1947.